

description of the methods of assessment and statistics should make it easy for future workers to compare their results with Sjögren's or to include the relatively small number of his survey into a larger body of material. This is a model study of its kind especially as the observations are extended to persons who migrated into or from the island during the time covered by the investigation.

The survey has all the advantages, but also the shortcomings, of the purely genetic approach in psychiatry. With the interest centred around the major psychoses and severe "obligophrenia" it takes no notice of borderline cases, neuroses, mild forms of psychopathy and of high-grade mental defectives. Criminals, prostitutes and other asocial persons are not recorded, nor are we informed about the social and other environmental conditions under which these patients and their relatives live. The occupational distribution of the patients would be of special interest in a thoroughly studied population of this kind. As Professor Sjögren announces a similar monograph on a second island, he may welcome these suggestions which are not intended to depreciate his admirable work.

W. MAYER-GROSS.

## SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

**Kinsey, Alfred C., Pomeroy, W. B. and Martin, C. E.** *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. London, 1948. W. B. Saunders Co. Pp. xv + 804. Price 37s. 6d.

It must be made clear at once that no review could do justice to this monumental work—unless the reviewer happened to enjoy the freedom of unlimited space that was once accorded by the *Saturday Review of Literature* to Mr. C. K. Ogden, when he enlivened its pages with his famous review of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. All that can be said, within the prescribed bounds of a few hundred words, is that the Kinsey Report, as the work is now generally known, is the most important contribution to the literature

of sexual behaviour since the publication of Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. To this it may be added that no one can regard himself as fully informed on the most recent developments in the subject who has not read the report, carefully and critically; and this, it must be emphasised, means the report itself, not a selection from the spate of interpretive works that generously offer the reader some remission from the toil of struggling through its 804 closely printed pages. For the report sets out not merely the results of the most comprehensive inquiry that has ever been made into the realities of sexual behaviour, contrasting the plain facts with the vastly different assumptions that underlie the codes offered by society for our moral guidance, but it also described in detail a new methodology; and it is literally impossible to make up one's mind about the validity of the findings without having first appraised the technical procedures by which they were derived. These chapters on methodology, which also include a critical survey of all previous investigations of the subject, comprise about a fifth of the book, and no summary could do them justice. They must be read and evaluated as a whole; and as they happen to be very difficult and might even appear forbidding to readers untrained in statistical method, it is fair to add that the effort to understand them will repay any serious student's trouble.

At this date it may perhaps be assumed that Kinsey's findings are familiar to the educated reading public. It is fairly common knowledge that he and his fellow workers, having analysed data collected in interviews with over 12,000 people and basing this volume on the results derived from a study of 5,300 white U.S.A. males, have concluded that the sexual impulse is universal, and shows itself at all ages from infancy onwards. Sexual activity reaches its peak earlier than most of us have been prepared to admit, and continues into extreme old age, even into the eighth decade of life, and later. The authors have also shown how remote the moral pretensions of society can be from the realities as they found them. The situation is like that described by Samuel Butler in

*Erewhon*, where everyone sings the praises of the "musical banks," but would never dream of using their currency. Forms of sexual activity hitherto stigmatised as perverse appear to be so widely spread that it becomes a nice philosophic question whether or not they should be regarded as normal. More important, it becomes an urgent issue whether the legal enactments concerned with such behaviour, based as they are on the assumption that certain kinds of sexual outlet are so abnormal that society must treat them as criminal, do not call for drastic amendment to bring them into accord with the established facts. The matter is of intimate concern not only to the community but to the individual. Many homosexuals, for instance, carry an almost intolerable load of guilt, made heavier by the miserable feeling that they are unfortunate exceptions in a world consisting mainly of "normal" persons. Very probably large numbers of these would continue to be oppressed by this burden, however many of their fellows happened to carry it too; but there must also be some who would find their task of social adaptation easier if they knew how widely spread homosexual impulses really are. The figures given in the report apply, of course, to the United States alone, but it is hard to believe that a similar inquiry carried out here would yield very different results. It is likely, too, that we should find, as Kinsey did, that social class, education, religion, variations in the conditions of life (as between rural and urban, for instance)

and occupation are important determinants of differences in sexual outlet; and that when all the forms of such outlet are added together they produce a total impressively greater than has been generally assumed.

For further information—and it must be said that the information is well worth having—the reader must turn to the report itself. It is excellently written and a worthy monument to the decade's hard work that went to its making. It is gratifying to learn that the inquiry still goes on, with undiminished care, and indeed with a technique that embodies valuable lessons from all that has been achieved so far, and that in the years to come we may expect further volumes, equally illuminating, on female sexual behaviour, marriage, prostitution, sexual segregation, and many allied subjects.

The significance of the report lies not merely in its findings, important as these are, but above all in Kinsey's remarkable account of how he approached the problems before him. For the first time in this field the data have been collected and analysed on sound taxonomical principles, and have resulted in information that can stand up to the closest statistical examination. One cannot help wondering what riches would have been mined if Havelock Ellis, whose intuitive genius extracted so much from such sparse data, had been equipped with the resources of the Kinsey technique and with such invaluable assistance as has been provided by the Kinsey team of workers!

E. M. HOLMES.

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